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ABSTRACT

This handbook describes the development and operation of family enhancement programs in Parent Centers in Wisconsin. Parent Centers, also called Family Centers, provide opportunities for parents to meet each other and to share concerns, ideas and fun. They can be "legitimate" places for parents to find friends for their children and themselves, and can help parents learn how parenting can be more fulfilling and valuable, even though not always easy or enjoyable. Services in Parent Centers are usually low-cost, informal and are provided by peers to peers. In the first three chapters of the handbook, Parent Centers are defined, the role of program facilitators is discussed, and a rationale for Parent Centers is suggested. Chapters 4 and 5 briefly describe several Parent Centers in and outside the city of Madison. Chapter 6 indicates how space, funding, staffing, record-keeping, training, program, child care, and parent involvement problems were solved in these two areas. The concluding chapter, Chapter 7, briefly explores the issue of success in Parent Center programs. The handbook also includes a brief history of attempts from 1974 to 1979 to provide support to parents and parent programs in and around Madison. An outline of the content of a facilitator training workshop is appended. (Author/RH)

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FACILITATING PARENT CENTERS

A SHARING

OF

IDEAS AND EXPERIENCES

BY

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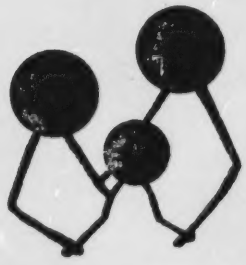
1980

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The main body of this handbook incorporates ideas and information from several drop-in programs for parents that exist or are in the planning stages in Madison, Wisconsin. Most of the programs have developed out of community-based organizations which are members of the Coalition for Family Support Networks. For the past year, a group of individuals, each of whom represents one of the drop-in programs, have been meeting every few weeks to share ideas, process, satisfactions, and frustrations. Members of this group, the Parent Center Facilitators' Support Group, are the collective authors of the handbook. Their names and the programs they represent are listed together with program descriptions, for the convenience of readers who may wish to contact individuals for more information.

An additional section of the handbook contains information gathered through questionnaires and visits to some drop-in programs for parents outside the Madison area: the Family Center in Green Bay, Wisconsin; Project H.O.P.E. in Lancaster, Wisconsin; and the Family Focus Centers in Evanston and other Chicago-area locations. We are indebted to them for their sharing.

The Family Enhancement Program takes final responsibility for the way anyone's ideas may appear in this publication.

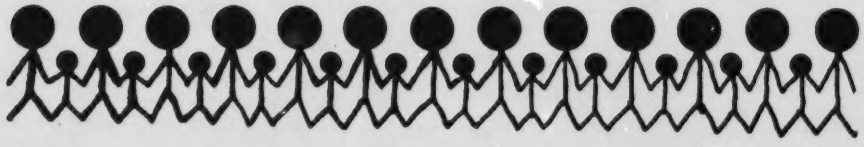


HOW TO USE THIS HANDBOOK

We want you to be an active user of this handbook, a user who will relate your own experience and ideas to ours, and enter into creative argument with what we are saying. You will need to adapt what we have done to fit your community, your resources, your style. Because many people have contributed their ideas, the handbook itself can be read as creative argument. If you find yourself disagreeing with a point of view that is expressed, please consider that point of view not as an authoritative statement but as one expression of caring about new ways to support families.

We hope you will read the entire manual, in the order in which it is written. In addition, you will probably want to use the Table of Contents to help locate specific information when you need it.

Parent Centers are a new phenomenon in the United States. Facilitating their development demands both sensitive and sensible thinking. Let this handbook help you think.



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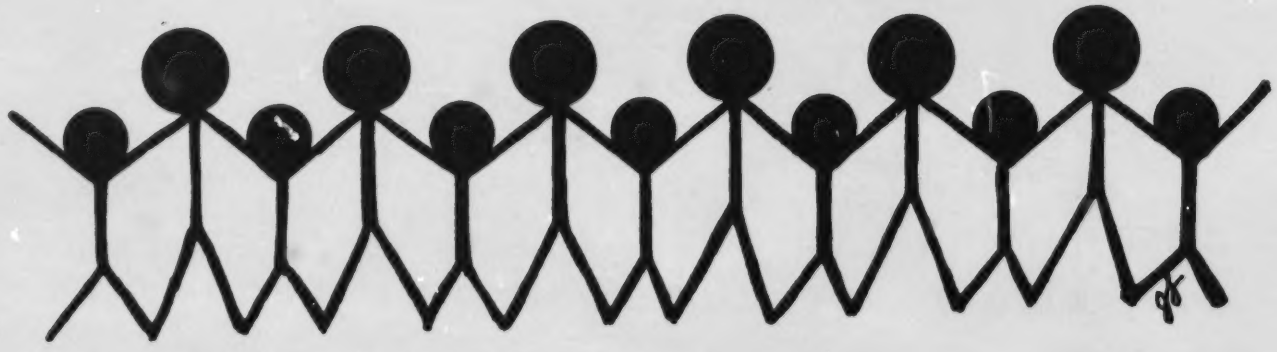


PREFACE

How cooperative relationships among organizations have developed: An historical sketch

Here we are, in December 1979, finishing a handbook about parent centers. The handbook was written in order to share with others some of the ideas and information developed about drop-in programs for parents, developed among a group of innovative, peer-based, and struggling organizations that began looking at the needs of families and devised many different strategies during the past five years. Gradually, these community organizations, and some professionals as well, have developed sets of relationships that result in much cooperative activity among organizations and among parents and other volunteers. Some of this cooperation has grown around drop-in programs, some around other activities that support families. Our support of one another has had an organic growth out of the individual history of each group. That growth has been intentionally fostered through sharing of information, resources, staff, volunteers, training, and trust.

The Family Enhancement Program has worked to facilitate the networking of organizations and individuals since our beginnings in 1974. While our perspective is limited, because we are only one among many organizations, we have been around a relatively long time so have some sense of history about how a climate of trust and cooperation has grown and made this handbook possible. The following brief chronology intends to give the reader some sense of how it all happened. We apologize for any errors or important omissions. They are unintended.

1974-75

Two new organizations began almost simultaneously, yet independently of one another. Both were started with the volunteer energies of community people, primarily parents of young children who wanted to improve their own lives and reach out to other parents. The Childbirth and Parent Education Association of Dane County, Inc. brought together family members and health care professionals to work for improved childbirth education and hospital practices, to provide information and education to parents of young children, and to form support groups of various kinds including neighborhood play groups and Mothershare groups for parents of infants. An all-volunteer organization, C.P.E.A. sends a newsletter to all parents of newborns in the county. They generously include notices of resources for parents provided by other community groups.

The Task Force on Early Childhood Health Enhancement (which became The Family Enhancement Program) brought together several couples who were parents of young children, and a consultant from the state Bureau of Child Behavior and Health, in a Madison Urban Ministry project to explore ways to improve life and enhance parenting in families. Because they became aware of C.P.E.A. and wished not to become competitive, Task Force members approached C.P.E.A. so that differences in approach were made explicit and some cooperative planning was done. The two organizations developed some shared training for group leaders, and Family Enhancement purchased space in the C.P.E.A. newsletter for a time, to help the C.P.E.A. budget.

With part-time staff hired from religious seed-moneys and a small foundation grant, Family Enhancement developed a curriculum, trained discussion leaders, and brought together groups of parents for informal discussion of family issues in an enhancement/wellness mode. F.E.P. also began seeking for other ways to help develop peer-based supports for families.

During this period, the Family Life Education Unit (FLE) of the Dane County Mental Health Center developed supportive relationships with C.P.E.A., assisting them with training, providing parenting classes, and making referrals to their groups. FLE is supportive also of the other organizations described here.

1976

Building upon the nearly single-handed work of a young mother who moved to Madison after participating in Parents Anonymous in a neighboring state, a group of concerned citizens began in this year to design The Parental Stress Center/Parents Anonymous, Inc. A tremendous volunteer commitment and some very modest funding through the Youth Services Bureau, a small foundation grant, and the Junior Women's Club enabled the center to open in January 1977, providing a telephone call-in line for parents in stress answered in their homes by trained volunteers and also sponsoring Parents Anonymous groups. F.E.P. staff participated in the planning and fund-raising for this new organization whose primary focus is the prevention of child abuse. PSC/PA has currently five full-time staff and an expanded program; while its major focus is on parents in stress it has been very supportive of programs designed to involve parents with less crisis-oriented concerns. Their telephone line results in referrals to CPEA and FEP as well as to other community groups. People who come to CPEA and FEP activities often learn also of the opportunities at PSC/PA (both opportunities to be trained as volunteers and opportunities to seek help).

1977

Shortly after the Parental Stress Center opened its office and stressline, without staff, representatives of CPEA, FEB, and PSC/PA met to design a shared proposal for funding under the Community Employment and Training Act (CETA). The proposal was funded. It provided four staff people for PSC/PA, with no funds or staff to other organizations. However, the three organizations involved agreed to work with one another in a variety of ways, including some sharing of staff time, office resources, and newsletters. Out of this cooperation grew Parents' Place South (PPSo), the first of Madison's parent drop-in centers. It will be described in detail later in the handbook.

In the fall of 1977, a group of school social workers and psychologists from northeast Madison schools formed a collective called The North East Team (NET). As one major interest, NET addressed an identified need for strengthening family and community networks. Members of NET and a staff person from FEP became acquainted when they found themselves working together as volunteers in a workshop on Childrens' Conflict Resolution. The acquaintance has grown into a set of cooperative relationships which now include all of the organizations mentioned above.

1978

In February of 1978, the Family Enhancement Program, with the support and counsel of the Madison Urban Ministry, brought together a group of parents and professionals who live or work on the northeast side. The group included representatives from NET, PSC/PA, FLE, and PP So, as well as people new to this developing network of organizations. As a result of this beginning, Parents' Place North East opened in October. It will be described in detail later in the handbook.

In the spring of 1978, PSC/PA opened a parent drop-in program in the Truax Housing Area of Madison. This program was started in response to a request for help from staff of the Madison Housing Authority. This particular program does not now exist, but has evolved into evening drop-in times at the Parental Stress Center location. The program as it now exists will be described later.

Early in 1978, a member of the Community Mental Health Services Board (51:42 Board) telephoned a number of individuals and agencies to suggest that organizations interested in preventive/supportive activities for parents "get your acts together". She pointed out that CPEA, FEP, PSC/PA, NET and other organizations and individuals had been advocating at 51:42 hearings for the mental health needs of ordinary parents

and families. She stated that most 51:42 funding had to go for intervention rather than prevention, and that some kind of united effort could benefit prevention programs. FEP accepted the role of convenor and facilitator for a group of prevention-oriented people, and out of this group developed the Coalition for Family Support Networks. All the organizations underlined above are Coalition members, as are several additional organizations. The Coalition process has enabled the continued growth of trust and shared planning. It has also helped organizations obtain funds.

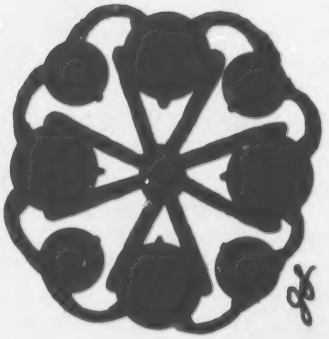
1979

The Parent Center Facilitators Support Group began meeting in 1978 but became more defined in 1979. Convened by FEP, the group includes individuals from the Dane County Mental Health Center (FLE unit and Child Adolescent Family Unit), from the Madison Housing Authority, from the Tenney Nursery and Parent Center, from the Family Enhancement Program, Parents' Place South, Parents' Place North East, and Parental Stress Center. As other centers develop, we expect that their facilitators will also participate. The group meets monthly, with no formal structure or tasks. This handbook is written out of information obtained from members of the support group. The major author, Terri Heath, was a graduate student in social work assigned to FEP. She assembled the information using questionnaires and interviews.

A number of organizations and many, many individuals have been omitted from this sketch in the interests of brevity. This does not diminish their importance in the authors' eyes!

NOTE

The way things came together for us in Madison was our way, and it feels good to us. Every community is different. If something out of our history helps you change your community in ways that support families - let us know. We'll be glad to receive your sharing.



CHAPTER ONE

PARENT CENTERS: WHAT ARE THEY?

Parent Centers, also called Family Centers, are developing in a number of locations across the United States. We have become aware of some similarities among them, and aware of many differences as well.

A common characteristic of Parent Centers is a concern for parents themselves, as important individuals with individual needs and strengths. Meeting the needs and supporting the strengths of a parent are seen as helpful to children and to the family as a system, as well as helpful to the parent. Some centers focus most of their energies on parents.

Another common denominator of Parent Centers seems to be a concern for the well-being of children and the ability of parents to deal effectively with their children. Some centers, including Project H.O.P.E. in Lancaster, Wisconsin, and the Tenney Nursery and Parent Center in Madison, focus much of their energy on involving parents and preschool children in child-centered activities together. In other centers, the involvement of children at the center is more secondary.

Among the different ways Parent Centers across the United States define themselves are the following: programs for any parent who comes and participates; programs for well parents who want to improve their lives; comprehensive programs for families of children 0-3 years old; programs for parents and preschool children; programs for all parents in a neighborhood; programs for teen-age parents; programs for parents of teens; centers for instruction in parenting skills; programs for parents in stress; programs for parents with deficits; family crisis intervention.

In Madison, despite the diversity of programs that are developing, we all seem to share an intention to build low-cost, informal, friendly programs. We are in general agreement that our kind of Parent Center is:

Primarily for parents and other supportive adults;
Also a good place for children;
A learning place, but not (usually) a school;
A sharing and supporting place, not judgmental
Health enhancing, building on strengths, rather than cure or therapy-oriented
Network building among agencies, parents, community volunteers and professionals, not competitive
An organizing center for peer-based, intentional helping systems*
A stimulus for parents and families to build and/or strengthen their own natural helping systems*
"Owned" by participants, not "owned" by an agency
Open to change, not static
Among many other things, it might provide "childhood" for some adults who missed it: play, trust, etc.

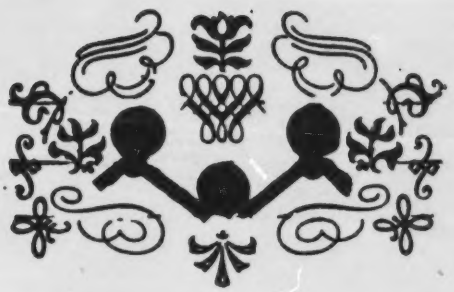
In less theoretical terms, a Parent Center is people coming together. It is space for parents and other adults to do things together, a friendly relaxed feeling, a schedule, information about community resources, a coffee pot. It is space and equipment for kids, and people to help with child care at least some of the time while parents are together.

A Parent Center is an opportunity for parents to meet each other, to share concerns, ideas, and fun. It can be a "legitimate" place for parents to find friends for their children and themselves. It can serve to help parents learn how parenting can be more fulfilling and valuable, even though not always easy or enjoyable.

---

* Helping systems, in our thinking, are of at least three general kinds: formal intentional helping systems, including social service agencies and health systems. These tend to be professionalized and quite expensive. Informal intentional helping systems, such as self-help groups, volunteer stresslines, play groups, discussion groups, babysitting pools, Parents Anonymous. These tend to involve volunteers and to be free or inexpensive. People tend to participate for limited time periods. Natural helping systems, such as families and networks of friends. We believe most people receive (and give) most of the helping in their lifetimes through their natural helping systems.

In our thinking, a Parent Center needs to ba a place where the opportunity and authority for designing a program belongs to parents. The service is not provided by professionals to clients, but rather by peers to peers, each giving and receiving information and support. Professionals can be involved but their need to function as participants who bring some particular strengths, not as "experts".



CHAPTER TWO

FACILITATION: WHAT IS IT?

I. DEFINITION

Although Parent Centers can be developed via other methods, this handbook aims to work within a "facilitative, cooperative, parent-owned and operated" model of a center.

Facilitation is an often misunderstood concept and therefore will be defined here. According to The Random House Dictionary of the English Language, to facilitate is "to make easier or less difficult; (to) help forward". Our definition includes this, but in addition defines facilitation as a concept of on-going change and redefinition. Our Parent Centers, by this definition, must continually re-evaluate themselves if they are to remain responsive to that particular groups of parents involved in them at any given time. Parent Centers change because of new involved parents who bring different needs and different resources. It is in the nature of a Center to be forever changing, re-evaluating and re-defining its role and its purpose.

II. DIFFERENCE FROM DIRECTION/COORDINATION

"There is a wide variety of ways for the functions of leadership to be performed. Many groups have one person who is designated the group leader. That person takes responsibility for what occurs in group gatherings. He or she has been delegated power to take initiative and responsibility for calling meetings, acting as chairperson, planning agendas and perhaps to make day-to-day decisions for the group. This is the common form of group leadership. An alternative form, however, is for the leadership functions to be spread throughout the group and for all members to share in decision making and responsibility. (This) kind of leadership. . .--facilitation--is designed to help make groups perform more effectively by soliciting the leadership skills and potential of all members."[1]

---

1 A Manual for Group Facilitators, Center for Conflict Resolution, 731 State Street, Madison, Wisconsin 53703. 1977. Available by mail order, $3.60. An excellent resource to help explore the meaning of facilitation in depth.

When we asked the question, "Do you think a facilitator is different from a director or a coordinator?", answers ranged all the way from "no difference" and "I would feel comfortable with any of those roles and it wouldn't matter to the public" to "yes, there is a definite difference". Some respondents seem to see a mere semantic argument. Others are almost fiercely committed to the word, and the role, or facilitator.

In general, our respondents view a director as an authority figure with ultimate responsibility and power, subject to policy directives from a Board. A coordinator is seen as closer in role to a facilitator, yet is usually seen as the responsible person rather than just one of many who are responsible as is the facilitator.

Our respondents indicated that a person in the role of director or coordinator can choose to function in a facilitative style much, if not all, of the time.

More specifically, respondents suggested that a facilitator is one who:

> "Knits together, makes connections between others, helps others to be aware of what they want to do, helps them to see their options,"
>
> "is concerned about enabling people to use their own resources, makes sure everyone has input as well as him/herself, makes certain that everyone's resources are utilized,"
>
> "works at getting people together, and works with people rather than directs them,"
>
> "makes things more fluid, easier."

The responses we received indicate that Parent Centers are usually facilitated. They appear to operate cooperatively rather than in an hierarchical manner, and it appears that parents in the centers desire this style of operation.

III. STAFFING THE FACILITATIVE ROLE

It is the concensus of those interviewed that a Parent Center needs to have at least one individual identified to fill the role of facilitator. Whether this is a paid staff person, or a particular parent, or a community volunteer, or a rotating position filled by parents, it is usually necessary to incorporate the role into a program, however small.

Among small, struggling, unfunded or underfunded Parent Centers, there is an ongoing debate about how the facilitator role should be filled. Most of those interviewed felt that any Parent Center would need at least one quarter-time or half-time paid staff person. This person then could be available as a fill-in for a parent or other volunteer who was scheduled to do child care but spent the night rocking an ill child to sleep, or for the mother who was just called by the school to come over and take her child for X-rays for a possible fracture.

One respondent aptly described most people's sentiments when she responded to this question: "Do you think a center must have a paid staff person to maintain itself?" She replied, "Ideally, no; realistically, yes." Your new center may or may not choose to have a paid staff person. Perhaps you will develop an unusually stable group of volunteers/parents who can maintain the program past the typical early stages of maximum involvement. Perhaps your decision will come down to a question of economic realities:

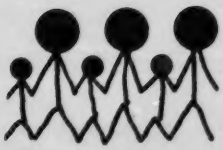
"Do we have enough money to pay a staff person?"

"Do we want a paid person badly enough to spend the necessary energies seeking, or raising, funds?"

"Will we have a better chance for funding later on if we use our energies now to begin our Parent Center without money?"

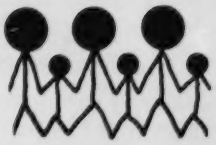
"Could we borrow some time of a paid staff person from an established agency, to help us get started?"

One final comment on staffing the facilitator role: it appears to be the program facilitator role that most needs a paid person. This is the person who must facilitate the on-goingness of the Parent Center. There are a myriad of other opportunities for facilitation at a Parent Center: skilled individuals may facilitate a particular discussion, or a short-term rap group, or an informal conversation, or a play session among children, or what happens at home among their own families. In Madison, the Family Enhancement Program periodically offers a workshop to train parents, professionals, and other volunteers in facilitating groups around family issues. We believe that among the more than 100 individuals who have participated in the 12-hour workshop, many have then shared new facilitative skills at Parent Centers. For an outline of the training workshop, see the Appendix to this handbook.



CHAPTER THREE

WHY HAVE A PARENT CENTER?



I. SHARED VALUES

We, and people we interviewed, share some values/ideas which we think a Parent Center can share with families. We have not put these statements people made into parallel form, but rather will just list for you what people said:

(1) parents are the most important people in a child's life.

(2) if parents feel good about themselves then they are better parents

(3) parenting is difficult, and especially difficult when we are isolated

(4) we want to encourage and enhance social-emotional health in families

(5) we want to encourage peer support and shared expertise among peers

(6) it is desirable to share information and support among people who care about family life, both professionals and non-professionals

(7) caring about other people (families, neighbors, children, lonely people, old friends. . .) is a positive value for us

(8) common value that the world be a good place for raising kids

(9) enhancement of a world or of people who care <u>for</u> kids, not merely take care <u>of</u> them

(10) encouragement of neighborliness

(11) building networks of support among families and also among organizations that deal with families

(12) importance of listening to others

(13) relating positively to all ages of people

II. ISOLATION OF FAMILIES

1. Theory*

"There is much evidence that many parents and children of all socio-economic backgrounds suffer from a degree of isolation unique to our modern, mobile society. Small families and our increasingly age-segregated communities often deny parents sufficient experience with children or the opportunity to learn child-rearing techniques from a variety of older persons. The informal supportive structures of the extended family and the stable community are being seriously eroded, and yet the society has not committed itself to providing similar supportive structures outside the family."*

2. Real-Life Stories**

(a) "When I moved to Madison, my husband and I didn't know a soul. All my family and friends were a thousand miles away. My little boy and I used to go to the shopping malls, just so I could look at some other adults. I would go to the laundromat to find somebody to talk to. After the baby was born, I received the CPEA newsletter and got involved in a play group so I met some other parents and had someone to talk to. That saved my life! I'm glad there are

---

* "The Role of the Family in Child Development: Implications for State Policies and Programs", a report of the Education Commission of the States, Early Childhood Project, December 1975.

** Quotations and examples are all from Madison. Names and minor details may have been changed.

Parent Centers now, although my own kids are old enough at last so I can get out on my own. I'm looking for a job, and I have friends."**

(b) Grace and her husband Bill moved to Madison from Iowa, with two youngsters, a job, and a family network left behind. Grace, a devoted young mother who had to drop out of school to care for 7 younger siblings after her mother's death, found a Parent Center the first week after her arrival. When she and her husband moved to a public housing project after he became unemployed, they both participated in a different Center near their new home. During a number of crises, including the serious illness of a new baby, they sought out and received much friendly support from other parents. They have returned to Iowa now, but keep in touch with some Parent Center friends here.

III. HEALTH IS CONTAGIOUS

1. Theory

"Our society's helping institutions are predominantly curative our solution oriented. We seek experts for everything. There is a need for approaches which recognize that health, like disease, is contagious. There is a need for institutions that involve persons in caring about and supporting one another."*

2. Real-Life Stories

(a) Janice felt depressed and distraught at the possibility she was pregnant with a third child. Happily married, with two delightful youngsters, she felt unable to cope and undecided what to do. She telephoned the Parental Stressline and talked with a volunteer who listened, encouraged her to consider her options, and suggested she try a Parent Center for fun and friends. The pregnancy proved not to exist. The Parent Center involvement, for both Janice and her husband George, became on-going. They participated in a Facilitator Training Workshop and a Fathers' Workshop, helped to start a new Center nearer their home, and two years later, remain involved. One day at a meeting Jan wept, saying, "I'm just crying because I don't think anyone understands how much I care about this Parent Center."

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* Statement by Charles Pfeifer, Madison Urban Ministry, referring to Jonas Salk's writing about contagious health.

(b) Eleanor, a graduate student in the School of Nursing, was assigned to a weekly practicum morning at a Parent Center. After a few visits, she said, "I'm puzzled. I thought these parents would be having lots of troubles with their kids. They seem to be doing all right. What is this place about?" At the end of her semester, she said, "I learned a lot here, and I got so much help for my personal life."

(c) Gladys and her husband and two little boys moved from the East coast to a farm 12 miles from Madison. Both parents are professional people, and Gladys is employed part time. Almost every week, she drives with the children to a Parent Center. She finds friendship and relief from child care there. She takes on responsibilities in the running of the Center. She talks with other parents about her own dilemmas, and listens to their concerns. Recently, she participated in a 12-hour training for the Parental Stressline and regularly answers the line for a half-day-a-week slot, on her home telephone. "I was in the shower when I got my first call, and I listened and talked for a whole hour, wrapped

up in a wet towel and sitting on the toilet. One day, I got eight calls. Sometimes I feel as if I really helped the caller."

IV. POTENTIAL FOR FAMILY CHANGE

1. Theory

"The most powerful way to impact children's lives, we believe, is to improve their families - the lives of their parents. The most important part of parents' lives is their social/emotional well-being. Parent Centers can be a means, a vehicle, to help parents improve their own social/emotional health -- to do it for themselves. Parent Centers are not schools, yet they have a curriculum: personal power acquisition, self worth, caring relationships, interpersonal skills, parenting skills, wellness as a frame of reference, and support systems for better living."*

2. Real-Life Stories

(a) "I'm enjoying my kids more. I don't lose my temper as much. I'm going to find someone to exchange child care with on a regular basis, so I can get out and get some recreation for myself."

(b) "Let me just say the sessions were so warm and supportive that what leadership was already there could emerge at work, with friends, at home. Have been relaxed and mellow almost consistently since the groups. Home life very satisfying. In all areas, am taking more responsibility for my needs - and am getting them met in a beautiful way."

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* Statement from Family Enhancement Program literature.

(c) ". . .a lot of warm, good feeling about myself and the parenting I do."

(d) ". . .a lot of confidence in the strengths and potential of my kids."

(e) ". . .made me realize that I, too, as a father, husband and man, am valuable and need support."

(f) "Good to be with other men for more than bullshooting."

V. AN ALTERNATIVE TO "THE MEDICAL MODEL"

1. Theory

"Rather than simply set up educational opportunities for parenting, or advice-giving groups, we need to give young parents the feeling that they are important, that they have choices and can make them appropriately. In other words, we must provide them with advocates who want to help them bring out their own best assets. When parents feel good about themselves, they can pass on a good self-image to the baby. By the same token, when parents feel 'put down', inadequate and angrily defensive, all of these feelings are passed on to the new infant and become a basic part of the infant's feelings about self and society.

"We must give up our pathological medical model of looking for people's weaknesses and ignoring their strengths. Our missionary efforts and 'help' high risk or underprivileged people can be an example of such destructive chauvinism. Few people can tolerate our pathological eyes, which are so expert at recognizing their weaknesses but ineffective in recognizing and backing up their strengths. . .

"We must provide better outreach, nutrition and preventive care education in pregnancy. We must give young parents a chance to choose and participate in the positive excitement of delivering and becoming attached to a brand new baby. We must give new parents purposeful, positively supportive information

and choices about how to nurture and provide an optimal environment for their new baby. We know how to do all of these; we have the expertise, the professionals to do it. . ."*

2. A Comment

The article by Dr. Brazelton is perceptive and moving and fine. Yet in one way it suggests merely abandoning one "medical model" (the pathological kind) for a new "medical model" (the enlightened kind, with enlightened professionals still the people with answers and expertise, the people who know best). All the same Dr. Brazelton's attitude is basically heart-warming. We know that many professionals of all sorts are moving toward supportive stances like this.

3. A Real Life Story

A young child was abused severely in her natural family. She spent many years in foster homes, where she was sometimes abused. She became a young, single parent, a client of social services and holder of a Medicaid card. She turned to a neighbor for friendship and counsel, and was helped to join a Parent Center, where her inborn energy and talent led her to accept responsibilities as a leader and planner. She participated along with professionals, agency staffs, and other parents as an equal among equals in a training session for facilitators. There she met a volunteer sponsor from a Parents Anonymous group. Now she has added

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* Excerpts from an article by T. Berry Brazelton, M.D., written for publication during the International Year of the Child.

PA to her life, and is helping others and gaining help there. She has also become part of the planning group for a new Parent Center to be located nearer to her residence.

(There are some professionals involved in this true story. The most helpful ones seem to be associated with people-helping-people, peer-based programs, at least at this period in the young woman's life.)

VI. IDEAS ABOUT "MODEL A" AND "MODEL B"

Dr. Brazelton wrote, above, about the "pathological medical model". Dr. John McKnight, a sociologist, has been writing and lecturing in recent years about the "professionalization of social services", about "dependency-building help" and about "dehumanizing people" with the overpowering "expertise" of professionals. Dr. Brazelton seems to believe that if professionals will change, a medical model will be satisfactory and useful. Dr. McKnight seems to be saying that no matter how sensitive the individual professional may be, a system of professionalized social services has inherent serious deficiencies.

Parent Centers are aiming at reaching all sorts of parents, including those who "fall through the loopholes" of the professional-helping-a-client-model. We regard most parents who participate in our Parent Centers as basically well people who enjoy giving and receiving support (Model A) rather than ill persons who need rehabilitation or professional instruction (Model B).

Many of the respondents to our questionnaire felt that both models have their place. However, theypreferred to have their own Parent Centers function on Model A theory. One respondent stated that she hoped those involved in a center would know how to make referrals to professionals if an individual parent wanted Model B service.

It may be initially difficult to establish a Parent Center with Model A philosophy because so much of the existing society operates on Model B theory. There exists a pervasive notion that only a few people know how to give help and, therefore, only they should attempt helping. In contrast, our notion is that each person is a unique resource and that everyone can learn how to help another, at least in some degree.

Our respondents saw many advantages in Model A, the people-helping-each-other model:

(1) often people will learn more if they feel they have something to give/share as well.

(2) all are facing concerns, growth, and changes so all can benefit from help and give help.

(3) Model A is a support model - often support is all that is needed.

(4) Model A is more prevention oriented than crisis based.

(5) Often a person will learn more through Model A because s/he doesn't feel lectured to.

(6) There can be more change if ideas are self-generated.

(7) It feels more comfortable to be involved in Model A than in the professional/client model.

(8) When a professional functions in Model A style s/he can be seen as a person rather than as an expert.

(9) Model A can provide an enriching range of experience, on a whole gestalt of both emotional and social.

(10) Plain ordinary people can be very effective.

Our respondents listed some disadvantages in Model B, the professional-helping-client model:

(1) Model B is a "one-upmanship model" where the helper gets satisfaction and/or salary for doing for a client. It is a one-way street, a put-down.

(2) Often the service is not freely chosen in Model B; sometimes legally required.

(3) Sometimes a person can't get help when s/he needs it if the professional does not have time.

(4) Model B provides a more limited range of experiences.

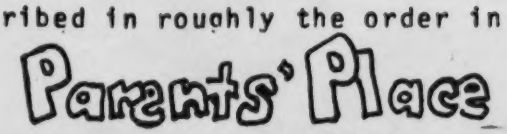
(5) Model B often demands that the helpee admit there is a problem. It tends to label and separate successful parents from unsuccessful parents.

CHAPTER FOUR

PARENT CENTERS IN MADISON

These centers will be described in roughly the order in which they were started.

I. PARENTS' PLACE SOUTH



Parents' Place South was planned and co-sponsored by the Family Enhancement Program, the Childbirth and Parent Education Association, and the Parental Stress Center/ Parents Anonymous, who, collectively, saw a need for a regularly available program for parents that would be enhancement/wellness oriented. Using donated space in St. Mark's Lutheran Church, the center opened its doors on October 19, 1977. For several months, the center enjoyed staff time on loan from PSC/PA as part of a CETA grant; staff time from FEP has also been donated. For a time, the center had a volunteer person as facilitator. Currently, there is a half-time paid facilitator, who is a member of Family Enhancement staff.

From the beginning PPS has been open regularly once a week for discussions on Wednesday mornings. Currently plans are being made for more open time, probably Friday morning plus an occasional evening.

A rotating Board of parents runs the center. Each position is held for three months. Each Board seat carries with it specific tasks, such as arranging speakers or discussions, planning the newsletter, or arranging child care.

For additional information about Parents' Place South, you could contact Peg Casbarro, Program Facilitator, 605 Spruce Street, Madison, Wisconsin 53715. Telephone 1-608-256-3890.

A Real-Life Story

A TYPICAL DAY AT PARENTS' PLACE

The basement of St. Mark's Church is dark when the first staff members arrive. Sherry and Kathy turn on the lights and start heating water for tea. Jim lays out a display of pamphlets and books related to parenting. Soon another Sherri and her three-year-old daughter, Lateefa, an outgoing child, come down the stairs. Lateefa greets all the adults and heads for the play room.

Jim is working on a macrame plant hanger and the others are visiting over a cup of tea when Sara and her two-year-old son, Jeremy, arrive. Jeremy silently follows his mother, a stunningly pregnant brunette, into the kitchen. He eyes the others suspiciously as he passes them. After putting the coffee on to brew, Sara joins the others at the table. Just then Pam arrives carrying her six-month-old. Pam has not been here for a few weeks and everyone exclaims how the baby has grown. Jeremy and Lateefa watch the baby for a while before heading back into the play room. Sherri follows them.

Parents, mostly mothers, start arriving quickly now. Virel carries in her sleeping Ellie and puts her in a crib. Her two-year-old Brenden joins the other children in the playroom. Liz arrives with three children: two are hers and one is a girl she babysits.

The last parent to arrive is Nancy with 4-year-old Sarah and baby Matthew. Babies crawl and gurgle on the carpe t, near the circle of chairs where the adults sit.

Kathy follows the toddlers into the play room to give Sherri help in supervising them.

Around 10 a.m., Jessie goes into the play room to ask the children, "Who would like to help me make cookies?" Like a Pied Piper she leads them into the kitchen. The ensuing noise reflects a high degree of enthusiasm if not of expertise.

About this time, the parents settle down to discuss their chosen topic for the day. Discussion lasts about an hour. Cookies are served as the discussion is breaking up. Children and parents are in both the meeting room and the play room now, everyone munching on cookies. The group discussion has given way to smaller-scale discussions. Parents' Place ends its morning with a songfest. All the children gather around their parents. Sitting in a circle of friendly faces, holding a kid on your lap, is a nice way to start the rest of the day! Shortly afterwards the group breaks up and the parents leave to prepare lunch for their cookie-filled kids.

- by Sara Richards

YOUNG PARENTS' PLACE

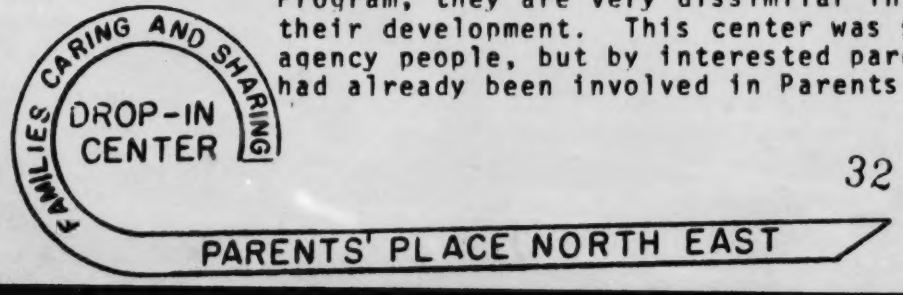
In December of 1979, a new parent center group is being formed, which will share facilities and open times with Parents' Place South. Family Enhancement is sponsoring the development of this new center specifically for young parents (under 21 years). The current half-time facilitator of PPS is working an additional ¼-time on this new project along with a core group of young parents, and is receiving assistance from professionals who have interests in parenting, adolescents and teen-aged pregnancy.

There has long been a desire to develop a parent center for young parents, and the creation of this program is exciting to those who are contributing their in-put. It is not clear what will happen to the center, whether it might some day choose to operate separately from PPS. However, during the planning stages, it has been beneficial to the fairly rapid formation of this group to have the facilities and equipment already arranged for. It is assumed that all the groups using PPS will benefit from mutual cooperation. We are encouraged by the active participation and interest generated by this project so far.

II. PARENTS' PLACE NORTH EAST

A sister center to Parents' Place South, Parents' Place North East is located in surplus school space - one classroom - in Sherman Elementary School, with space rental paid by the city of Madison. A full-time staff person and a child care person, paid for a few hours weekly, assist a group of parents in operating the program. Currently the center is open on Tuesdays and Thursdays regularly, with additional events such as monthly potlucks, occasional skills classes and workshops. On Thursday mornings, there is a parent-selected topic for discussion; for example: "Homemade Costumes for Halloween" or "Ways for Us to Conserve Energy". Adapting a single room to the needs of both parents and children presents a challenge. Parents are in the process of building a loft in order to provide attractive play space.

Although the two Parents' Places have a common bond through their sponsoring agency, Family Enhancement Program, they are very dissimilar in the manner of their development. This center was started not by agency people, but by interested parents, some of whom had already been involved in Parents' Place South and



wanted a similar center closer to their neighborhoods. They created their center through a process developed by the Madison Urban Ministry while planning a Day Center for Older Adults. The model follows, with annotations underlined.

Community Development Process

1. "Identify a facilitator(s) for the process and provide a project group who will work with this facilitator(s)/ organizer(s) in the project development".

   Two FEP staff were identified as co-facilitators for the Community Development process, and the FEP Board became the project group.

2. "Identify a local community with people who are ready to address the needs with which the project is concerned."

   After studying population statistics and interviewing community people, the northeast side was chosen as a site and interested people were invited to help.

3. "Bring together a core group of people in the local community who are aware of the need for the project and who are committed to seeing it developed. (This group must involve people directly affected by the project. The process will not work if these people are primarily professionals and service providers)."

   The core group began work in February with about 30 persons involved, including both parents and professionals. About twelve of these people continued being involved and helped to open the center in October.

4. "Convene bi-weekly meetings with the total support group (local community core group and project group). Discuss the project and its effect on the local community (people and institutions). These discussions initially will focus on the moral and value implications of the model. For example, the model and community development process assumes: (1) that all people, including poverty people, are important resources to the community and should have a say in community decisions; (2) that problems and oppressions of people are best addressed by dealing with all people and institutions in a community, rather than by singling out a particular disadvantaged group for special attention; (3) that "services" take power away from people and dehumanize them; (4) that we must develop approaches which focus more on developing strengths of people rather than on dealing with their problems; (5) that we must develop and strengthen informal helping

systems among people which enable them to support one another so that they are not forced to rely solely on professional and institutional programs for their support."

We learned that health professionals who participated in the development of the Day Center for Older Adults had had to struggle hard with these concepts. However, the group of professionals who helped as core group members planning with parents seemed comfortable with the concepts. Some parents questioned trying to include both poor and middle income parents in the center. One or two people left the core group around this issue, which has traditionally been divisive in the northeast neighborhoods. However, both low income and middle income parents continued to be part of the core group.

5. "Broaden the support group by involving community leaders, professionals, potential funding sources, and community people who are interested in involving themselves in the project. The facilitator(s) assures that all people are given equal opportunity for in-put in the process. Particular care is taken to encourage professionals to question the project design while not allowing them to control the process. This approach strengthens the project model while educating decision makers and professionals about the resources that are available among people in the community."

The involvement of potential funding sources was a particularly interesting process. Parents and professionals made numerous appearances, in groups, before city, county, and even state legislative bodies, in search both of funds and of support for the concept of peer-based programs. Group appearances involved representatives of many of the Coalition for Family Support Networks agencies. People advocated for funding for each others' programs, and voluntarily cut back their own requests to assist others'.

6. "Continue dealing with specific aspects of the project. Consider available space, volunteers, and staff needs. Discuss ways to involve the community in publicity and support. Write proposals describing the project for funding and publicity purposes. Consider evaluation procedures."

7. "Formthe policy and working board for the project. Form other subcommittees. Many of the people for these committees will come from the support group and will involve people being affected by the project."

It has taken a surprisingly long time to reach the step of forming a board, although a number of committees have functioned. The center opened long before a board was formed. Plans and policies were made by a nearly unstructured concensus, or by the people who took initiative and carried out needed tasks. A Board was finally formed in July 1979. It is composed chiefly of participating parents.

8. "Recruit volunteers to work with the program on an on-going basis. Again, many of these people will come from the support group."

Volunteers are mostly also parents who participate in the program. Middle school children are volunteers for child care. Efforts to involve grandparent figures as volunteers and/or participants have not succeeded.

9. "Advertise staff positions. Hire staff. Staff should be recruited primarily through contacts with the support group and should involve people affected by the project."

Parents interviewed candidates eligible for Work Incentive Program (WIN) funding, and in September 1978 hired a parent who had participated in the core group since the beginnings of the project. During the first year of operation, this parent was a staff member of Family Enhancement, but working as a program facilitator with and for the core group of parents.

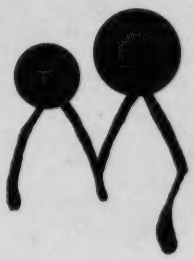
10. "Facilitator(s) and support group people not involved in the project boards, committees, and program withdraw from explicit involvement in the project. These people serve as advocates and resources to the project in the broader community because they are committed to the individuals and principles of the project. They become part of the supportive network of the project and involve themselves as consultants and friends of the project on an on-going basis."

During the first year of Parents' Place North East operation, the Family Enhancement Program and its staff remained explicitly involved in the program. While one of the co-facilitators of the development process withdrew, the other continued to be part of the core planning group, took regular turns doing child care, and was for a time a member of the Board. Family Enhancement actively sought out funding sources, and provided supervision and administration for the staff person at Parents' Place North East. A distinct change occurred with the incorporation of PP NE in fall 1979, establishing the Center as a separate entity.

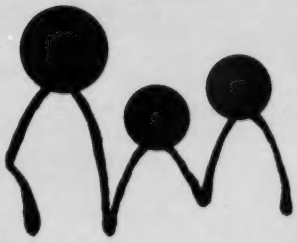
Concerns about the Process

We hope that this detailed account of an organizing process will be helpful to someone else. So far, the evidence is not clear as to the long-term strengths of the process. We at FEP are feeling some pain around the distinct separation from the parent center to which much of our time and caring was committed for 18 months. We are feeling rather like parents whose teen-agers want to be on their own -- a little relieved, but a little apprehensive, and certainly eager to maintain contact and support. Again, like parents looking at their newly adult offspring, we are hopeful that Parents' Place North East will provide us with support and encouragement, as well as accept support and encouragement from us.

A Real-Life Story About Planning



On a sunny cold February day, parents and professional people sat on the floor at the Sherman Avenue Methodist Church and wrote on big sheets of paper what they wanted in their parent center. They wrote:



WE WANT. . .

..A drop-in place. Open more than one day a week. Easy to come to. Located on bus routes. Open at times available to working parents.

..A place that feels accessible and comfortable to people. Good atmosphere. Right choice of building.

..Primarily for parents. A place for mothers and fathers together, and also separately. Some times for parents & children together with other families.

..A good safe place for kids, with adequate child care, informal planning and varied activities. A place where kids can experience other adults.

..Local control. Parents involved are heard, and have a voice. Emphasis on the Northeast Side community. Pride in the community and its strengths.

..Emphasis on caring and cooperation. A place for friendships to develop. Trust. Share Resources. A place of help for parents who are at the breaking point.

..Oriented around needs and resources. A clearinghouse for information for parents.

..Planned activities (pastry baking, running, Yoga). Discussions (sometimes with a topic, sometimes "open". Share, relax, learn, interact, cook, play, discuss.

..Low cost or free.

..Some paid staff but also parents and other volunteers helping. Joint responsibility.

Then they wrote their fears on slips of paper to be shared anonymously:

..People will not show up.

..People will force their ideas on the group instead of allowing the whole group to decide.

..People will be all low income people.

..People will not be low income and will not relate well with those who are.

..Too many people will be from agencies.

..Too many people will be someone important and not just a parent, so parents' ideas will be ignored.

Gradually out of this meeting and many more, grew the choice of location, the commitment of volunteers, the caring involvement of people to each other and the program, which led to finding funds and to carrying out plans for Parents' Place North East.

We've given you a great deal of detail about the beginnings of Parents' Place North East. To keep in touch

with current developments, you could contact Osa Mendez, Program Facilitator, Parents' Place North East, 1601 North Sherman Avenue, Madison, Wisconsin 53704. Telephone 1-608-241-3421, Tuesdays and Thursdays.

III. THE PARENTAL STRESS CENTER/PARENTS ANONYMOUS, INC.

The beginnings of PSC/PA are described in the Preface, page vii, of this handbook. After a number of moves, the Parental Stress Center now occupies a small, comfortable old house, the property of Memorial United Church of Christ, which uses the building only on Sundays. Having the house, rather than needing to make use of several different locations, has had the effect of making the whole program feel more like a drop-in center, what with some Parents Anonymous groups able to meet there at various regular times, and the drop-in programs which originally met in the Truax Housing Area (see page viii) meeting there on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. Unlike the PA groups, the drop-ins don't generally deal with child abuse, but they often deal with very stressful situations. Typically, parents attend the drop-in times as a result of having called the PSC/PA stressline number. Their call has been answered by a trained volunteer, who after listening, may suggest coming to the drop-in program as one option for further help with the stress being experienced. However, both PA groups and the drop-in times include fun and more light-hearted friendships as well as serious discussions. While PA groups function on the national model, with a parent as chairperson and a volunteer professional as sponsor, the drop-in times are different. Drop-ins are facilitated by a PSC staff member as one part of her job.

PSC/PA has also developed a child care exchange program which allows children to be cared for at the center by some parents, while other parents get time off to go away from the center for recreation or other needs.

Parents who've had "time off" then take a turn at child care while other parents have a "break".

Real-Life Stories

a) "I wouldn't miss this time for anything. This is my time for me and I don't get this time anyplace else."

b) A man who shares custody of his three-year-old son came to a drop-in time because he wanted to hear a discussion of the announced topic "Changes in Sex Roles". He made the discussion very interesting to the women there because he was a man who wanted to try a non-traditional role. He later found a job working with young children.

c) "I needed a place to go and talk about what was happening with me and my kids. I was getting solid information at the Battered Women shelter about jobs and legal matters but I needed a place to go and talk about what was going on with me. I got that here, and it helped me in the changes I needed to go through."

Judy Dale provided information for this handbook. The person to contact now for more information is Sharon Pinkert, Parental Stress Center, 1506 Madison Street, Madison, Wisconsin 53711. Telephone 1-608-251-9464.

IV. PARENTS' COMMUNITY FELLOWSHIP

In mid-1978, several parents talked with staff of the South Madison Neighborhood Center about needs they perceived among families in their multi-racial neighborhood of small neat homes and large public housing complexes. After listening thoughtfully, the Neighborhood Center director requested consultation with the Dane County Mental Health Center, which then assigned a staff person to work with the Neighborhood Center staff and with parents.

Because the assigned consultant was already familiar with Parents' Place South, only a few blocks away, she was concerned not to help develop a program which would compete with, or detract from, PPS. After discussions, both FEP and PPS staff and parents agreed that a new program need not feel like a threat, and that connections might be intentionally built during the development process.

From October through December of 1978, a group of key motivated parents met weekly with Neighborhood Center and Mental Health Center staff. The concerns of parents could be grouped into four general categories:

1) Vandalism, truancy, and discipline problems in the neighborhood - developing ways of communicating among parents about these situations, and ways of dealing with the problems.

2) School/Parent relationships - whom to deal with at school, and how, around everyday situations and also special needs related to mixed racial concerns, handicapping conditions, foster children.

3) On-going dialogue and communication among parents in the neighborhood, for improvement and enjoyment of life, not only for dealing with problems.

4) A desire for some on-going activity at the Neighborhood Center that would support parents, in addition to the current focus on activities for children and young people.

As parents themselves identified needs, possible approaches and activities, staff people supported their ideas and helped them to develop facilitative skills. Parents in this core group of leaders gradually developed a second group of parents, which met in people's apartments or houses near the Neighborhood Center. In this group, as many as twelve parents, most of whom were not motivated

to go to meetings at the Neighborhood Center, would meet to discuss and learn from one another, from parents in the leadership group, or from some invited "expert" such as a school social worker.

During the months of development, parents became interested in the idea of locating a fixed site for an on-going parent center. When, in February, the South Madison Neighborhood Center burned down, one prime site for a parent center was destroyed. Group members explored other sites such as churches and a day care center, without success.

Toward spring, yet a third group of parents began coming together in the same neighborhood, this time including mostly people associated with the nearby child day care center. They approached the Dane County Department of Social Services and obtained help in organizing a short-term group for single parents.

While these groups were to some extent separate from one another, all of them grew out of the original Parents Community Fellowship, and all of them benefitted because the staff consultant from the Mental Health Center stayed involved throughout the process. Without her support, the whole effort might have collapsed when Neighborhood Center staff energies were drained by events resulting from the fire. Instead, parents continued to meet, somewhat less regularly, into August of 1979. We believe there continue to be parents who have a commitment to rebuild the group when the new South Madison Neighborhood Center is built. There seems also to be an intention that the Mental Health Center will again support Neighborhood Center staff in work with parents.

We have coined the name Leadership Development Model to describe the efforts outlined above.

A Real Life Story

A parent who brought a lot of energy and enthusiasm to the Leadership Development Model undertook to get a Christmas tree in the yard of her apartment complex. With some skillful facilitation, she persuaded other parents to contribute money, and helped head

off the anticipated vandalism of the greens.

Residents took pride and pleasure in the decoration.

Contact person for more information about the Leadership Development Model is Barbara Larsen, Dane County Mental Health Center, 31 North Henry Street, Madison, Wisconsin 53703. Telephone 1-608-251-2341.

V. TENANT ASSOCIATION GROUPS - MADISON HOUSING AUTHORITY

Madison Housing Authority operates several public housing sites. This model varies from others we have described because each group is a "closed" group only for tenants of a particular low-income housing area. These groups meet in homes. Their only costs are for refreshments. Some groups operate on a donation basis for these costs, others ask the hostess of the day to provide refreshments. Staff time is donated by Madison Housing Authority; the staff person must perform many roles, in addition to facilitation of parent groups.

These groups have formed usually over one main issue. For some, it was an increase in vandalism in their neighborhoods; for others, it was a way of organizing collectively to make their needs heard by the Madison Housing Authority.

A Real Life Story

"I feel very frustrated trying to work with parents. My time is very limited, and I get just inundated with crises. Many of the parents have very basic survival needs. They lack basic skills like nutrition and first aid. I want to relate to parents as a friend, but they I get trapped in something like a child abuse case that I am supposed to report. It helps some to have this Parent Center Facilitators Support Group to meet with, and talk it over with."

For more information, contact Pat Anderson, Madison Housing Authority, 702 Braxton Place, Madison, Wisconsin. Telephone 1-608-266-4380.

VI. TENNEY NURSERY AND PARENT CENTER

The idea of a nursery school and parent resource center being combined developed because the same people in the Tenney Park neighborhood became interested in both kinds of programs, and the two programs seemed to have some logical links, some common goals. The core group for development of this center included four mothers of young children (one of them an experienced early childhood teacher) and another young woman who, although not a parent, brought special skills and energy around parent cooperative nursery schools, and around using discards and inexpensive materials to create an environment.

Early in the planning stages of this program, one member of this core group attended Parents' Place South several times, with her infant. She and one other member of the core group also participated in Family Enhancement Facilitator Training. Additional connections between the Tenney program and other parent centers are developing through the participation of parents in more than one center.

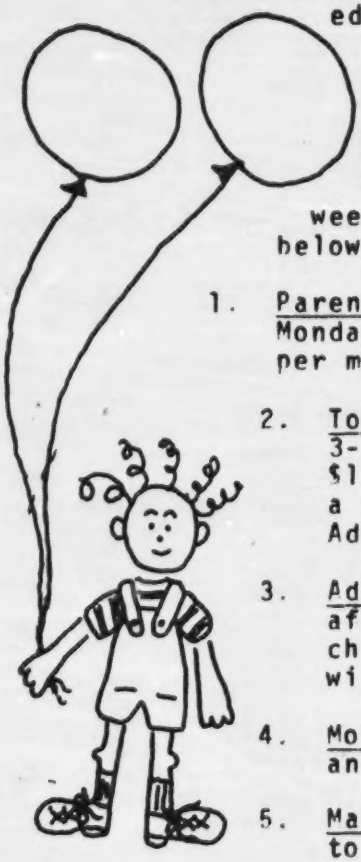
The core group has worked with these ideas:

(1) The parent center will be located along with the nursery school. The overall budget will cover expenses for both programs. Some programs will be for children, some for parents and children together, and some for adults.

Comment: The Tenney program opened in September, 1979, in Lapham School, a "surplus" elementary school which is being rented to community groups. Like Parents' Place North East, Tenney has obtained its rent money through the city of Madison. It also obtained CDBG funds to build a magnificent play loft. Except for these monies, the Tenney program is self-supporting, with fees charged for all phases of program. Thus it differs from any other parent center program we know about.

(2) The center will be run by parent volunteers and one teacher hired for the cooperative nursery school (this person was part of the planning group). It will be geared to meet the needs of its users. The intent is to serve all parents who want to use the center. It is not just for the parents of the children in the nursery school. It is intended for anyone who would like to have a place to go to get and share ideas about and support in parenting.

Comment: Many many parents have used this center as a place to go with their young children. So far, the activities have been child-centered, with parents making their own connections with one another "around the edges".



The schedule for the Tenney Nursery and Parent Center follows. Fees are subject to change and are listed just to give some idea of the range. All the paid staff time (32 hours per week) is used in the activities listed below.

1. Parent-Cooperative Nursery School. Monday-Thursday, 9-11:30 a.m. Fee: $40 per month.

2. Toddler Time. Thursday afternoons, 3-5. Friday mornings 9-11:30. Fee: $1.50 for parent and one child; $2 for a family day care provider and children. Adults stay with the children.

3. Adult-Child Activity Time. Wednesday afternoons. $1.50. Mostly for older children, 5-8 years or so. Adults stay with children.

4. Movies. Once a month. 25¢. Adults and children watch together.

5. Make 'n Take Workshops, for parents to make and take home inexpensive toys for their children. Monthly. During December, twice a week. Fee between $2 and $4.

Most activities at Tenney have been carried out in a large former classroom, now housing the play loft and many other imaginative modifications that make it extremely inviting for children. An adjoining small room is being developed as a space for parents, with a few books and a coffee pot. A small group of parents are working to develop more specific activities for adults. First steps in 1980 will include:

1. An adult activity night in January: a sing-along to learn songs to sing at home with kids.

2. A class in parenting taught by University of Wisconsin Extension, at the Tenney location. 12 parents will be enrolled. All will bring their children. 6 parents will be in class while the other 6 care for the children, and then roles will reverse. $3 per session.

A Parent's Real-Life Story

"In the two and a half months that we have known about the Tenney Nursery and Parent Center:

1. Sonja and I have spent ten Thursday afternoons at "Toddler Time". She protested so strongly when we came for only a half an hour that I rescheduled our swimming lessons so that we could stay for the full time each week. (She still protests, though, when we leave after the whole two hours).

2. She has had the chance to try out many new toys and activities at "Toddler Time". She's experimented with the ladder, the fire pole, doll dishes and play house equipment. She did her first pasting and painting there. (In fact, she's done her only finger painting there--I'm still a bit of a coward at home).

3. Sonja has met some new friends as well as had a chance to play with "old" friends in a new environment. (After I mentioned "Toddler Time" to the other three mothers in our Monday morning playgroup, all have become participants themselves).

4. I have had the chance to meet other parents, to watch them interact with their children, and to talk about the joys and horrors of being with children.

5. I have learned more about Sonja and have become a better judge of what activities and toys she is ready for and which to hold off on for a while. We were able to try out such things as stringing beads, lotto games, and the toy train before considering getting ones for home.

6. Because of Nancy Daly's good example and because of the "Make and Take" evenings she has scheduled for toy and game making, I have made a number of games and puzzles for Sonja and as gifts for other children. Some of Sonja's puzzles have inspired other parents to make variations for their children and the circle grows larger.

7. Our whole family has enjoyed our involvement with "school and Nancy and the kids" as Sonja says. David took off of work one afternoon to visit;

Grandma and Grandpa came when they were in town. It has become so much a part of our schedule that it is hard to believe we've only been going for a short time. We're not the only enthusiastic ones though. After talking about the virtues of combining a support system for parents/childcare takers with an activity program for their children with a friend, she began figuring out the bus schedule so she and her child can visit. And her baby has not yet been born!"

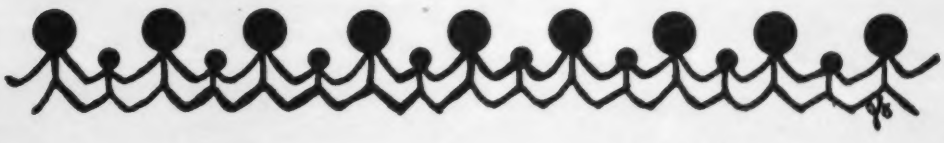
Ann E. Jarvella Wilson

For more information about the Tenney Nursery and Parent Center, contact Nancy Daly, 1-608-255-3250, or write the center at Lapham Community School, 1045 East Dayton Street, Madison, Wisconsin 53703.

VII. PROGRAM EVALUATION

Certain of the foregoing Parent Centers are participating in an ongoing program evaluation in an attempt to assess the impact of the programs and aid in needed designs. The drop-in programs which are involved are Parental Stress Center, both Parents' Places, and Parents Community Fellowship through its contact with FLE. Related evaluations of Childbirth and Parent Education Association, Family Enhancement Program, North East Team and related organizations, which are members of the Coalition for Family Support Networks, are also occurring.

Evaluation of the first six months of Coalition funding through the Dane County 51:42 Board has been reported to the Board. A more carefully designed evaluation for the 1979-80 funding year is being set up with the aid of our evaluation consultant, Dr. Betty Chewning.



CHAPTER FIVE

PARENT CENTERS OUTSIDE MADISON

I. PROJECT H.O.P.E. (Home Oriented Preschool Education)

Along with the Tenney Nursery and Parent Center which was described in the preceding chapter, Project H.O.P.E. deals especially with young children and their parents, and focuses more on activities to be enjoyed along with the children than on activities for parents somewhat separately from their parenting activities.

Project H.O.P.E. began when an advisory council was formed in the small Wisconsin town of Lancaster to research existing pre-school programs and plan a program to meet the needs of the Lancaster community. The council, composed of school personnel, parents and teachers of young children, and health professionals, met over a period of one year before writing a proposal for funding to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Title I-C. The proposal was funded for $52,000. In addition, they receive 80-160 hours per month of donated volunteer time, from 150 volunteers. Project H.O.P.E. was funded by the same source for a second year, and third year funding (the final year from this source) has been obtained for 1979-80. Other funds are being sought.

Activities at the busy HOPE House include Parent-Child Activity Day, Large Motor Day, Parent Workshops, Toddler Time, special events for parents and children, parent meetings with outside speakers, workshops to make toys and games, a lending library with books for parents and toys and games for children. In addition to these various drop-in activities that include adults, there are Children's Meetings each month, which are for children and staff, not parents. There are four staff people.

A Sample Event from the H.O.P.E. Newsletter

"On Monday, May 14, at 9:00-11:00 a.m., there will be a field trip to the mining museum in Platteville for 4 and 5 year olds and their parents or babysitter."

"A workshop for 4 and 5 years olds and their fathers will be held on Tuesday from 9:00-10:30 a.m., or 6:00-7:30 p.m. During this workshop you and your child will be working together to make yarn balls and scoops, a wooden boat, and a variety of other things that your child will be able to play with this summer."

For more information, contact Candace Smith, Director, Project H.O.P.E., 131 North Pierce Street, Lancaster, Wisconsin 53813. Telephone 1-608-723-6205.

II. THE FAMILY CENTER

Located at the YMCA in Green Bay, Wisconsin, The Family Center is jointly sponsored by the Green Bay YMCA and ECHO (The Early Childhood Association of Brown County. The Family Center serves pre-school age children, parents, parents-to-be, grandparents, and caregivers. When the Center began, the staff consisted of one CETA employee, plus volunteers.

The goals of The Family Center are:

1) To provide a place for parents to get together to share and exchange ideas and concerns.

2) To help families cope with the pressures and crises of parenthood.

3) To help parents develop competence and confidence in themselves as parents.

4) To increase parents' awareness of their children's developmental processes.

5) To provide young children with an opportunity for social experiences conducive to positive child development.

The Family Center is open Monday mornings from 9-11:30. Monday activities are planned for parents and children

to do together: sample topics include "In the Laundry and Cupboards" -- Learning at home with everyday experiences can be fun! and "More gym fun, plus ideas for physical play at home". There are activity centers where parents and children may do puzzles, read stories, play with dough, or share in large muscle activities.

Originally, The Family Center was open three times a week and included discussion times for parents, but remodeling of the building has limited the program. In the fall of 1980, the program will again expand to more open times and a wider range of activities.

For more information, contact Carol Bowley, The Family Center, YMCA, 235 North Jefferson, Green Bay, Wisconsin. Telephone 1-414-435-5361.

A Real Life Story

We happen to know that Carol Bowley has developed a wonderful activity program called KINDERGYM, for young children. When you stop in to see THE FAMILY CENTER, ask to see a sample!

III. THE FAMILY FOCUS CENTERS

Family Focus opened its first center in Evanston, Illinois in September 1976, following a years' planning with faculty of S.S.A., University of Chicago and the Erikson Institute. At the end of 1978, two additional centers opened in the City of Chicago: Family Focus Woodlawn Center and Family Focus West Lincoln Park. Family Focus Our Place, for teen-age parents, is in the planning stages.

Family Focus Centers offer many hours each week of drop-in time, including some evening hours. Parents of children under three are welcomed at the centers, and free child care provided by paid staff or volunteers is available while parents are in the center.

The Evanston Family Focus Center, which several of us from Madison visited in July, is housed in a "surplus" public school. We all admired the gym where preschoolers and parents were playing, the cheerful parents' room where mothers were busy stapling newsletters among the colorful arts supplies, the reading room with its easy chairs, and the little kitchen where sack lunches were staying cool in the refrigerator. We marveled at the intercom in the babies' room, available for a caregiver who might want to summon some parent from upstairs. We admired the colorful art work done by kids. We burned with envy at the budget figures, and the attendance records. And we were grateful to staff for the patient answering of questions and their listening to us.

We shall quote from Family Focus program descriptions, briefly.

"Family Focus: a new concept in family service"

"Family Focus is an innovative non-profit agency. . .offering parents-to-be and parents of chi'dren under three an opportunity to develop the self-esteem and confidence needed to raise their children in an atmosphere of caring and understanding . . .Few parent groups focus on this age, and resources for the parents of the very young child are scarce."

"These centers are directed by professionals. Both social workers and early childhood educators are always on hand to provide guidance to parents, to link them to needed services, and to model effective ways to respond to children."

"The Evanston Center serves a racially and economically mixed suburban population. The center's staggering attendance figures (500 families a month) provide substantial evidence of the need for such family-oriented support services for all parents of preschool children. . ." The center's annual budget is $126,126. It has a staff of six: a Director, two Center Coordinators, and three Child Caregivers.

"The West Lincoln Park Center features a small professional staff supported by a group of trained volunteer staff, working in a multi-ethnic, economically mixed urban community. It is located in a building formerly a Catholic school. Bilingual staff enables comfortable participation of community families. This model, sponsored by the Junior League of Chicago, was designed to help make possible the replication of Family Focus Centers across the country at relatively low cost. In addition to financial support, the Junior League has initially provided the volunteer staff who will gradually replace themselves with volunteers from the neighborhood. . ." This center's 1978-79 budget is $54,015. The staff consists of three people: a Director, a Center Coordinator, and a Child Development Coordinator.

"In the Woodlawn area, Family Focus offers services to a low income Black population in conjunction with the Woodlawn organization. Their facilities are housed in the Social Service Center of the University of Chicago. This model offers the opportunity to understand and communicate the process of joint planning with a large community organization. The program reaches many whose living conditions put both parents and children at risk, with the largest single group attending being teenage parents." The annual budget for Family Focus Woodlawn is listed as roughly $150,000. We do not have information on staffing.

The new Family Focus Drop-In Center for Young People and Their Children, Our Place, is located at 1819 Church Street, in Evanston. The flier we have lists two staff, a Director (the same person who directs Family Focus Evanston) and a Coordinator. We do not know the budget for this center.

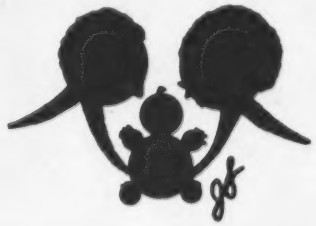
We were informed that the total budget for next year will be in the $700,000 range.

Program Evaluation: "As pilot facilities, Family Focus Centers will serve as bases for gathering data on community development of program supporting family strengths. Current studies of the effectiveness of the programs and parent participation at the centers will provide information which should be of value to other communities. . .This is a cooperative project with the School of Social Service Administration of the University of Chicago, and involves a research director, faculty members, and graduate students."

A Real Life Story

"As a father on the road for two months, I was concerned for my wife and child. It was immensely gratifying for me to know there were other people who cared and who could help ease the load. Without Family Focus, a difficult period might have been an exceedingly traumatic one."

For more information on the Family Focus Centers, contact Bernice Weissbourd, President, Family Focus, 2300 Green Bay Road, Evanston, Illinois 60201. Telephone 1-312-869-1500. Family Focus has published a handbook about the Family Focus model, available at a cost of $3.95 per copy, plus $.85 mailing costs. They also publish a newsletter at $4 per year cost.



CHAPTER SIX

HOW DO WE DO IT?

This chapter will pull together some information collected from interviews and questionnaires. We will take a final look at ways various groups secured space, funding, equipment, programs, child care, and most importantly, parent participants.

I. SPACE

The most inexpensive way to gather for a Parent Center is by meeting in parents' homes, or in free space donated by a church, neighborhood center, etc. Meeting in homes has advantages -- friendly feelings, neighborliness, simplicity -- and also can cause some problems. Some parents might not be willing to take a turn at hostessing. There might be more feeling of ownership if a place is designated as the Parent Center. Rotating homes can be difficult to keep track of for parents who are new or irregular participants. Free space in a building controlled by a church or other organization can be a bonanza that will help get a Center started. There will inevitably be some friction about space use, and almost certainly the space will eventually have to be paid for at least nominally, unless the Center is a program that "belongs to" the organization that owns the space. In churches, you must get used to packing up and storing everything on Fridays. . .Public schools may have surplus space, and in Madison, at least, it is sometimes possible to obtain city money to rent school space. . .Many community buildings have play equipment, kitchen, gym space, etc. These can be an asset to your program.

Partners in Parenting, a newsletter published by the Family Focus Center, made the following suggestions in the Spring 1979 issue:

"YOU HAVE ASKED. . .

Where do you look for space in establishing a parent center?

Several factors should be kept in mind:

1) accessibility -- nearness to public transportation, availability of parking, distance from population you wish to serve.

2) neutrality -- local image of the neighborhood and the facility.

3) physical adaptability -- potential of the space to meet the needs of the population and the requirements of the program activities, and to create the desired atmosphere."

II. FUNDING

Among the local sources to approach are women's clubs, service clubs, church groups, local businesses, city councils and county boards. Some of these are possible sources of volunteer time, which is a non-monetary form of funding! United Ways are a possibility. Borrowing staff time from a local agency, such as a mental health center or neighborhood center, is a possibility.

Various federally funded programs designed to hire and train unemployed people can be useful: the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA); the Work Experience Program (WEP); the Work Incentive Program (WIN).

Foundations, local or national, are funding sources. Begin at home, then work with a knowledgable person or obtain a funding catalog that gives some indication of what kinds of programs each foundation is interested in. Family Focus is funded chiefly by foundations.

Regional and national church groups sometimes have funds to be used as seed money for programs.

Other sources of funds include mental health boards, Title XX Training funds, Wisconsin State Wellness Funds, Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (L.E.A.A.) funds, and E.S.E.A. Title IV-C monies through public school districts. For building purchase or renovation, Community Development Block Grants are a possibility. . . Last but not least, consider building a really low cost program, using volunteers, and raising money with the old faithful rummage sale.

A caution: If you want to be a crisis/stress program, that's fine. But beware of letting funders' pre-conceptions push your programs into a crisis mode. Somehow it is always easier to get contributions for "troubled families" than for "all families" -- people with existing strengths to help themselves and others as well as with needs. If you really want a preventive, supportive, wellness focus, you will need to be firm in that commitment.

III. STAFFING

Even more important than funds to pay staff is your decision about what qualifications you seek and what tasks you want performed. You will want to develop your own hiring criteria. Here are two samples from Madison:

1) Hiring Criteria for Parents' Place North East, Facilitator.

Developed at a meeting of volunteers from the planning Task Force. August 22, 1978

The facilitator should:

1. Be a parent, and/or demonstrate empathy and experience relating with parents.
2. Like children, and have empathy with them.
3. Have ability to involve parents as responsible participants and leaders.
4. Have ability to bring people together across neighborhood or other socio-economic and cultural boundaries.
5. Possess good communication skills.
6. Be open-minded: open to learning, to suggestions, to criticism, to training.
7. Be able to balance family and personal responsibilities so as to fit into a varied, flexible, somewhat unpredictable Parents' Place schedule.

2) Position Announcement: Program Facilitator, Parents' Place South.

Position requires knowledge, experience, and skill in working cooperatively with parents, young children, and community agencies. Half-time, $4500. Send resume to Family Enhancement Program, 605 Spruce Street, Madison, 53715 by July 9. Equal opportunity employer.

Job Description:

Work with Parents' Place South Board to maintain and strengthen the program.

Participate with parents in planning, discussion, child care, and clean up, when the center is open.

Maintain financial records and funding relationships.

Work cooperatively with community agencies in South Madison, and with the Coalition for Family Support Networks.

Individual will be a member of the Family Enhancement Program staff, with program supervision by the Parents' Place South Board.

Minimum Requirements:

Age 21
Available for work on appropriate, flexible schedule
Good communication skills, both written and oral.
Organizational skills.
Able to work comfortably with church people, community agencies, parents, and young children.

Additional desirable qualifications:

Education in child development, family life, adult education, or related field.
Experience in community development, social service, child care, or health settings.
Entry level typing and bookkeeping skills.
Resident of South Madison.
A parent.

When we look at the extraordinary variety of staffing situations described in this handbook, we despair of saying anything more that can be useful. Do your best to match your needs, your dreams, and your resources!

IV. RECORDKEEPING

In part, records are needed to satisfy funding sources. Therefore, this is a place to begin checking. Occasionally, a funding source may ask for information that seems to infringe on parents' rights, or to be an unnecessary burden on the program. A polite confrontation with the funders can change their minds.

Most centers keep records of which parents attend each day, and how many children came with them. This can easily be done by leaving an open notebook out for people to sign. This allows you to collect a list of names and addresses for mailing out newsletters if you choose to do this. It also allows those who are interested in your center to determine whom you are reaching within the community.

You might also want to keep records of agendas for each day, including child caregivers' names and the activities planned, as a kind of running journal.

Periodically, you might want to ask parents to fill out an evaluation form to see if you are meeting their expectations and fulfilling their needs.

If your center has a lending library, you will want some sign-out system for the materials or books.

Sometimes centers find they are using a large quantity of volunteer time which they may want to record. Often funding sources use this as a measure of how popular a program is within the community. One center records the number of phone calls received each day, for the same reason.

Your center might decide to ask staff to keep a journal as a historical record, or to help train a future staff person or Board member. A scrapbook of photographs, newspaper articles, and other records of center activities can be a valuable record and also a way to interpret the center to visitors. A log book left open to invite comments from parents or visitors might be another helpful recording device.

V. TRAINING

There are several sorts of training that go on in a parent center. The Facilitator or other staff need to be oriented and trained in the philosophy and modes of operation which the Center has developed. Board

members, particularly on rotating boards composed of members who take on short term tasks in center operation, need on-going training and support from more experienced parents and from the facilitator. This can be a very low-key training, but it's important. Volunteers need training, orientation, and appreciation for their contributions. Parents can obtain training in parenting skills from other parents, through discussion, through modeling by child care givers, through reading books available at the center, through specific short courses or lectures, a series of parenting skills classes such as the S.T.E.P. program, etc. Parents, staff, volunteers, and even program presenters who come to the center can obtain training from one another, each learning from particular strengths of persons in the group.

A Real Life Story

An individual highly skilled and knowledgeable about parenting led a discussion at a Madison Parent Center. As he left for his office, he said, "It's good for me to come here. You people are so open and interested that I share a good deal more of myself than usual. I get new insights about myself."

This story points up the obvious fact that learning in a parent center is often related as much to the personal lives and relationships of parents, both within the family and in their networks of friends, as it is related directly to child-rearing.

Two particular modes of training developed in Madison are used over and over again by programs associated with Parent Centers. In each of these models, parents, volunteers, students, and professionals participate together as peers. Each model involves twelve hours of training. Each training is largely, but not entirely, experiential. Each training is facilitated by two or more persons who lead the trainees through a set of experiences and learnings.

The first model, Parental Stressline Training, focuses on developing and practicing skills in listening, feedback, exploring options, guiding parents to community resources, etc. The training is designed to prepare volunteers to

answer the stressline during some assigned time periods. Evaluations of the training show that parents make use of the training in their own lives, and at parent centers, as well as on the stressline. A training manual is being developed by the Parental Stress Center and will be available from Frances Nelson, Director, Parental Stress Center, 506 Madison Street, Madison, Wisconsin.

The second model is the Facilitator Training Workshop. Parents and others who participate typically improve their ability to facilitate group discussions at the Parent Center. In addition, they learn more about their own families and about family life in general.

This training is a largely experiential approach to learning group facilitation skills and an enhancement approach to working with families. The content comprises values that we consider to be enhancement. This content is interwoven in the facilitation tools used and in the skills practices. (See the Appendix for a fuller treatment of this training). A workshop is offered every other month, with a follow-up workshop "Humanizing the Work Place" offered about twice a year.

VI. PROGRAM

What do people do at Parent Centers? If you've read the preceding pages, you already have many ideas about program. Perhaps the only activity that goes on in every single Parent Center might be informal visiting. Child care is an activity in almost all centers. The following is a very incomplete listing, just to start your own ideas flowing:

- taking naps
- making things
- music
- films
- exercises
- cooking
- reading
- eating
- writing letters
- preparing newsletters
- discussions on planned topics
- discussions on impromptu topics
- on-going discussion groups to explore a subject in depth
- classes
- lectures
- workshops
- Fathers' groups
- Adult-child activity times

Some centers have "drop-in" days when parents come and go as they please, and no program is planned. Other times are scheduled discussion times, sometimes with "outside speakers". One center scheduled a series of

classes in parenting skills for four successive Thursday mornings. Many centers have family potlucks, and go on a variety of trips or picnics. Most centers stock coffee for parents and juice for children. If a program has an active Board of parents, then Board meetings will probably take place at the Center.

VII. CHILD CARE

For those of us who are operating Parent Centers on a shoestring - and that means all of us in Madison - providing high quality child care is a vexing problem. Not only do we lack money to hire regular, reliable caregivers; in addition, most of us do not have really adequate space and equipment. Add to these difficulties the very special dilemma of drop-in child care: there is no way to predict whether two children or, say, fourteen children will appear at the Parent Center on any given day.

The two preschool-education Parent Centers, Tenney and H.O.P.E., handle this problem by requiring parents to call in and reserve space for their children. So far, the rest of us have not decided to take that option.

As discussed earlier, most centers are based on the idea that kids are important people and they need adults as good models. Kids deserve respect and need stimulation through activities and conversation.

Most of our Madison centers can provide play space for children, with more or less adequate play equipment, as well as books and quiet games. In some centers, children play in the same room where their parents stay, but in a designated play area. This may help a child to feel independent although still within sight of a parent. Other centers encourage children to stay in a separate room from their parents. Parents may prefer to keep infants with them during discussion times. Some toddlers and preschoolers may find it very difficult to separate from their parents, so that the parent may not be able to participate comfortably in the adult-centered program. Having children with an adult conversation group can cause discomfort for the group if a child begins to talk or cry. Each center, and each group, needs to develop norms for such situations which deal fairly with the needs of both kids and adults.

Most children who attend parent centers will probably be under six years of age, yet the Parental Stress

Center, with its evening programs for stressed parents, often has elementary school children to care for.

It is important to plan for children and make parent centers comfortable and inviting for them. If a child dislikes a Center, the parent may be reluctant to attend. On the other hand, if a program calls itself a Parent Center, yet seems to treat parents as mere transportation vehicles for children, the parent may justifiably feel cheated.

It is not within the scope of this handbook to discuss activities programming for children. We shall be preparing a separate manual on drop-in child care later this year. However, we would like to share our bias about scheduling children's activities. Notwithstanding all the uncertainties about what children will come (how old, how many, how active, how relaxed), we are sure it helps to have a bit of scheduling in mind: what we do first, when we have a snack, when we get into active play, etc. At the very least, a schedule gives us a point of departure, somewhere to be flexible from.

Staffing for child care can be managed in several ways:

1) paid child care personnel from outside the Center's participants; (Centers without funds for hiring child care could explore having parents contribute money, or having fund-raising events specially for child care, or obtaining staff through the Work Incentive Program or Work Experience Program).

2) local volunteers from outside the center, such as adolescents, college students, older adults, or middle-school schildren;

3) rotating, cooperative parents where one or two parents are scheduled each week to do child care while the others participate in the adult program;

4) open child care - children share the room with the parents and all care for the children cooperatively.

Caring for children is a complex and demanding activity for the most skilled and experienced of adults, even when a consistent group of familiar children are involved. Enabling parents and other volunteers to do child care

competently and sensitively at a drop-in center presents a real challenge!

Fortunately for Madison programs that belong to the Coalition for Family Support Networks, we have a child care specialist from the Dane County Mental Health Center to assist in training care givers. She's a skilled and humanistic person with extensive experience in family settings and group day care settings. She visits drop-in centers, consults on child care, and does training sessions. One group she trained was composed of middle school students at the school which houses Parents' Place North East. When school was out, she received the following:

A Real Life Letter

"Alexi,

this is Amy I baby sat at parents place

I'm just writing to ask you a question.

Here it comes - . . .

do you think there's much of a chance of

me baby sitting for or at parents place

* please write back I'd like to know

Sincerly

Amy

if I can't be a sitter in 7th grade I'd

like to thank you for helping me learn more

about kids and for being a good friend

Amy

A handbook on drop-in center child care is being developed and will become available through The Family Enhancement Program early in 1980. The handbook will include an outline for training volunteers and a method for planning programs with volunteer caregivers.

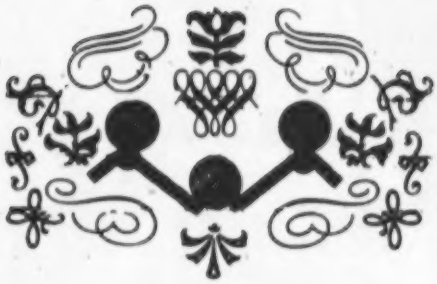
VIII. PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Who attends parent centers? All our respondents agree that women attend much more often than men. Fathers who are the primary caregiver seem more likely to attend. Single parents, as a group, are as likely to attend as two-parent persons, but it seems that centers may develop a trend for one over the other, depending on neighborhoods and friendships. Often employed fathers do not attend even during their "off hours" because, as one man put it, "I only have an hour a night with my kids and I don't want to spend it talking with parents while someone else plays with my children." Providing open hours on weekends is one way to make a center more easily available to employed parents and their children.

Attendance patterns, attendance numbers. At Madison centers, attendance ranges from 4 to 20 adults on any given day. Both weather and topics for discussion seem to affect attendance. Parents who attend for the first time are more likely to return if someone at the center has taken time to form a relationship with them, or if they have someone to come with them. We know that a good many parents have decided not to return to Madison centers because the quality of child care was not satisfactory on the day they first dropped in.

Maintaining the center is a task which challenges and involves parents. A parent who is asked to serve on the center Board rarely refuses, and such parents attend often. They may write, type, collate, illustrate, and address the newsletter. They make decisions about the functioning of the center. They choose topics and find speakers. They may help plan, write, and advocate for funding proposals. They may do child care and carry out some of the day-to-day operations of the center, such as child care, cleaning, maintaining supplies of toys, games, coffee, juice, etc. Parents act as welcomers and discussion facilitators. They do outreach and involve others in the center by distributing leaflets and posters. Parents also fill in for each other and, most importantly, bring in new ideas to the center.

Changing roles.
One parent pointed out a phenomenon which we've seen occur since with several participants: she began attending the center as a "consumer of services" and gradually became a "provider", as she took on important tasks and as she strengthened her own personal support network outside the center and no longer had the original need for center relationships and activities.



CHAPTER SEVEN

WHAT IS SUCCESS IN A PARENT CENTER?

In general, our Madison centers felt their success depended on parent involvement and interest. They measured this by the degree to which programs are planned and coordinated by parents and by the extent to which parent suggestions are freely given. If parents feel welcome and good while they are there, then a center is a success. If a center maintains an openness to new ideas and does not close itself off from new people, then it may be considered a success. One respondent defined success as simply survival as long as that center is needed and useful, which is to be determined by the parents who are participating. Success can also be measured by whether or not the parents use the information or relationships they get by attending, to "better their lives". Some respondents felt that their centers were too new for them to be able to answer this questions. Others felt that success was contingent upon the following conditions existing within the center:

1) when a core group of parents had developed which felt ownership and exercised authority over the center's activities. (This authority would need to be delegated by others and shared with new people).

2) a set of values would need to be incorporated and shared among parents involved.

3) the group of parents would need to be "moving", so that people who were entering the core group and leaving it would maintain a melting pot of new ideas - the group would not become exclusionary.

Success is also felt to mean that participating parents find a set of quality relationships that are relatively new and grew out of the center or out of some personal change resulting from center participation. These relationships might ideally be with people of different age groups and different backgrounds.

The material about "success", above, is a compilation of responses. We will add some additional comments. Unhappily, we are preparing this handbook against severe time limitations, so will not be able to treat the subject as thoughtfully as we would like.

"What is success?" is a profoundly value-laden question, in the development of programs as in the life of an individual or of a family. Programs, like individuals, have options for lifestyle. Programs, like people, may be profoundly influenced in their development by ideas they have explored and made their own, by values they hold passionately dear. On the other hand, programs, like people, may conform almost unthinkingly to the norms of the past, or to the fashions of today. They may find themselves caught in the money-hunting trap of writing proposals to fit the guidelines of funders rather than sticking doggedly to whatever it is that they want most to do.

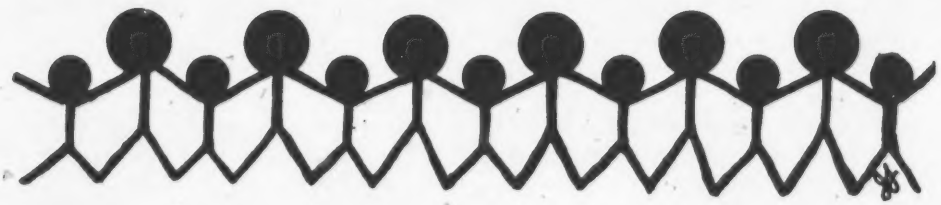
Many of us are exploring ways to support and enhance family life. The current wave of excitement about families is reminiscent of the excitement about early childhood education which exploded in the late 1960's around the Head Start program. Head Start has had many influences on early childhood programming in general. Its size, its funding, its national scope impressed us all. Excitement grew around its very bigness. For us Parent Center people, a program like Family Focus brings some of that same excitement. That excitement need not make us sure Family Focus Centers, with their impressive budgets and professional staffs, are "the" model, or the best model. Just as child development people have since the '60's worked at a wide range of alternative models of educating and caring for young children, and have found it good to maintain alternatives, so we in Parent Centers may find a wide variety of alternatives, each of which has its own style of "success".

We believe that a Parent Center might be a success on its own terms, and yet decide to quit, because its job was finished for the particular people involved. This would not be "failure" unless the people involved wished to define it so. A small, peer-based program would have more freedom to quit, intentionally and without guilt, than a larger program that defined itself more as an institution than as a set of relationships between people.

In closing, we'll suggest that we see, so far, these broad categories of centers:

Family Service institutions, run by professionals
Programs for parents of preschoolers, focusing on interactions with children
Programs for parents in stress, run by a combination of volunteers and professionals
Programs run primarily by parents, with more or less assistance from professionals, but primarily peer-based, people-helping-people in style

"Success" in each category will need to be defined by the people involved, including parents, professionals, and funders.



THE END

APPENDIX

DESCRIPTION OF FAMILY ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM TRAINING

Facilitator Training Workshop

This training is a largely experiential approach to learning group facilitation skills and an enhancement approach to working with families. The content comprises the values that we consider to be enhancement. This content is interwoven in the facilitation tools used and skills practices. Training time is twelve hours, usually being four 3-hour sessions.

1. Developing a climate for learning

    a. building trust
    b. building a sense of community
    c. being in touch with self and others

2. Group process skills

    a. process awareness
    b. listening skills
    c. processing skills
    d. intervention skills
    e. awareness of facilitation mode vs. teaching mode
    f. awareness of the flow and rhythm of a group's process

3. Group process tools

    a. work with agendas
    b. groupings of people (for different purposes -- e.g., dyads, triads, fish bowl)
    c. centering
    d. exercises and their appropriate use (e.g., Fears in a Hat, Networking exercise, Button Pushing)
    e. fantasy
    f. values clarification -- values I want to pass on
    g. validations

4. Content of Workshop

    a. networks/support groups
    b. sharing
    c. caring
    d. process awareness rationale
    e. child/people development
    f. group process theory

Throughout each workshop, participants are asked to focus on their own personal lives, rather than upon theory or hearsay about the lives of family members or agencies.

The specific agenda for each workshop is designed by the two persons who do the training. The process of the workshop is crucial, and the particular topics dealt with may vary a great deal from one workshop to another. To give the reader some sense of the topic content, we list topics from one workshop:

> Your personal family of origin - who was supportive for you, for your parents? Where did you turn for enjoyment, for help in stress or crisis?
>
> Remember something really lovely and satisfying from your childhood
>
> Awareness of facilitation in your own life -- what do you do that makes life flow better?
>
> What makes for good communication in my family life? (role plays, exercises, discussion)
>
> What values do I want to pass on/foster in my children? Where did I learn those values?
>
> Thank someone in this group
>
> Support you've given or received this week, at home or work
>
> Cooperation in my family
>
> Listening, feed-back, exploring options
>
> Homework: help someone feel good about himself/herself
>
> Participants choose own topics, and plan and facilitate an exercise or discussion next time.

In these workshops, many people develop some ongoing relationships with other individuals. Agency representatives also develop ongoing ties. Family Enhancement staff offer consultation and relationships around shared values and around facilitating groups.